



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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July 12, 2011

TO: Audit Committee

FROM: Wendy L. Watanabe
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **SUNSET REVIEW FOR THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY CONSUMER
AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMISSION**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Audit Committee recommend to the Board of Supervisors (Board) to extend the Los Angeles County Consumer Affairs Advisory Commission's sunset review date to June 30, 2012.

The Audit Committee instruct the Los Angeles County Consumer Affairs Advisory Commission (Commission) to work on improving the Commission's attendance, and ensuring the Commission's activities are consistent with the Commission's stated duties. The one-year sunset date extension is intended to permit a reevaluation of the Committee to determine whether sufficient changes have been made to justify extending the Commission beyond June 30, 2012.

BACKGROUND

The Board established and has continued the Commission pursuant to Los Angeles County Code Chapter 3.13. The Board approved the most recent extension in September 2009.

The Commission's duties include:

- Determining the needs of consumers and advising the Director of the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) of its findings
- Advising the Director of DCA (Director) on consumer protection matters and consumer interests

- Advising the Director of the need for changes in procedures, programs or legislation to further the interests of consumers
- Consulting with the Director on methods for more effective consumer education
- Reporting on matters referred for review by the Director or the Board
- Reporting annually to the Director and the Board on the Commission's activities

The Commission has 15 members, three appointed by each Supervisor. The Commission is required to meet six times per year. Commissioners serve without compensation. The DCA estimates that they spend approximately \$7,600 a year for Commission staff support, services and supplies.

JUSTIFICATION

The Commission met 24 times between January 2007 and March 2010 (approximately seven times per year), with an average attendance of 7.3 (49%) members. The Commission recognizes its low average attendance, and is actively working to improve attendance by sending letters and attendance records to all Commission members stressing the importance of attending Commission meetings.

We also noted that the Commission's accomplishments during the review period were primarily limited to issuing annual reports to the Board on the Commission's activities and assisting DCA in publicizing the Department's activities, and did not address most of the duties assigned to the Commission in the County Code. For example, although the Commission is supposed to advise the Director on consumer-related issues, the Commission primarily assisted the Department in publicizing the assistance the DCA provides to consumers (e.g., foreclosure advice, how to file a small claims case, and dealing with identity theft).

Despite the Commission's limited activities, the Director believes the Commission has an important mission and should be continued, and the Commissioners have indicated that they are committed to improving the Commission's effectiveness. The Commission's objectives for the next review period are to:

- Improve effectiveness by aligning activities with the Commission's duties.
- Formalize the process for advising the Director on consumer issues.
- Provide consumer-related information to/from the community groups and the Department.
- Continue to submit annual reports to the Board on Commission activities.

We recommend the Commission's sunset review date be extended one year, to June 30, 2012, at which time we will reevaluate the Commission's activities to determine whether sufficient changes have been made to justify extending the Commission's sunset review beyond that date.

Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Robert Campbell at (213) 253-0101.

WLW:JLS:RGC:TK

Attachments

c: Sylvia Granados-Southerland, Chair, Consumer Affairs Advisory Commission
Rigoberto Reyes, Acting Director, Department of Consumer Affairs
Robin A. Guerrero, Chief, Board Operations
Angie Johnson, Chief, Commission Services

COMMISSION SUNSET REVIEW
LOS ANGELES COUNTY CONSUMER AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMISSION
REVIEW COMMENTS

Mission. (Does the mission statement agree with the Board of Supervisors' purpose and expectations?)

The stated mission is as set forth in the ordinance establishing the Commission.
CONCUR

Section 1. Relevance. (Is the mission still relevant and in agreement with the Board of Supervisors' purpose and expectations?)

The Commission represents the interests and concerns of consumers to the Director and the Board.

The Commission's mission appears to be **RELEVANT**.

Section 2. Meetings and Attendance. (Are required meetings held and is attendance satisfactory?)

The Commission met 24 times between January 2007 and March 2010 (approximately seven times per year), with an average attendance of 7.3 (49%) members. The Commission recognizes its low average attendance and is actively working to improve attendance by sending letters and attendance records to all the Commission members stressing the importance of attending Commission meetings.

The Commission's meeting frequency is **SATISFACTORY**, while the Commission's attendance is **UNSATISFACTORY**.

Sections 3 and 4. Accomplishments and Results. (Are listed accomplishments and results significant?)

During this review period, we noted that the Commission's accomplishments were limited to issuing annual reports to the Board on the Commission's activities, and assisting DCA in publicizing DCA's consumer assistance. The Commission's activities did not address most of the duties assigned to the Commission in the County Code. For example, one of the Commission's duties is to advise the Director on consumer-related issues. However, the Commission primarily assisted the Department in publicizing its consumer assistance programs.

Despite the Commission's limited activities, the Director believes the Commission has an important mission and should be continued, and the Commissioners have indicated that they are committed to improving the Commission's effectiveness as described in Section 5 below.

The Commission's accomplishments and results are **NOT SIGNIFICANT**.

Section 5. Objectives. (Are the objectives compatible with the mission and goals and relevant within the current County environment?)

The Commission's objectives for the next review period are to:

- Improve effectiveness by aligning activities with the Commission's duties
- Formalize the process for advising the Director on consumer issues
- Provide consumer-related information to/from the community groups and the Department
- Continue to submit annual reports to the Board on Commission activities

The Commission's future objectives appear **RELEVANT**.

Section 6. Resources. (Are the resources utilized by the entity in support of the entity's activities warranted in terms of the accomplishments and results?)

Commissioners do not receive compensation. The DCA estimates that they spend approximately \$7,600 per year for Commission staff support, services and supplies.

Although the Commission's accomplishments (e.g., reported annually to the Board on Commission activities) were limited, the Commission's activities justify its expenses. The Commission is committed to improving its effectiveness during the next review period.

The Commission's expenses appear to be **WARRANTED**.

Section 7. Recommendation.

**EXTEND THE SUNSET REVIEW DATE FOR THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY
CONSUMER AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMISSION TO JUNE 30, 2012.**

Los Angeles County Consumer Affairs Advisory Commission Attendance Record

Commissioner	Nominated by:	3/31/07	6/30/07	9/30/07	12/31/07	3/31/08	6/30/08	9/30/08	12/31/08	3/31/09	6/30/09	9/30/09	12/31/09	3/31/10	Totals	% Attended
Number of Meetings per Quarter		3	3	1	1	3	3	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	24	
Ricardo Lara	1st District	3	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	10	42%
E. Marcelle Penn Mathis	1st District	0	2	1	0	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	0	2	15	63%
Vacant	1st District	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Helen S. Kawagoe	2nd District	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0		2	9%
Neil S. Rubenstein	2nd District	3	3	1	1	3	1								12	86%
Linda A. Smith-Gaston, Ph.D.	2nd District	3	3	1	1	3	3	0	1	2	1				18	95% *
Dionne Young-Faulk	2nd District							1	1	2	2	0	0	2	8	80%
Vacant	2nd District											0	0	0	0	0%
Vacant	2nd District													0	0	0%
Stanley Rogers	3rd District	3	3	1	0	3	3	0	1	1	2	1	1	2	21	88%
Helen Levin	3rd District	1	1	1	0	1	3	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	13	54%
Vacant	3rd District												0	0	0	0%
Anne R. Greer	3rd District	2	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0			5	24%
Gloria Cordero	4th District	2	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	21%
Sylvia Granados-Southerland	4th District	1	2	1	0	1	2	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	12	50%
Ho-Jeong Eun	4th District	2	3	1	1	3	3	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	23	96%
Joyce A. Ayvazi	5th District	1	1	0	0	1	3	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	11	46%
Laurella "Lolli" Benton	5th District	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	17%
Eugene Masuda	5th District	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	0	2	2	0	0	2	17	71%
Totals		24	23	10	6	22	28	5	6	16	13	5	5	13	176	
Average Attendance per Meeting →																7.3

Legend:

☐ Vacancy was filled or Commissioner did not serve on the Commission during this period.

* Commissioner resigned after Commission held one of two meetings in the last quarter of the Commissioner's term.